

# More Lessons *in* Discipleship



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Matt. 14:22–33; Mark 4:36–41; 6:51, 52; Luke 8:25; 24:37; John 6:19.*

**Memory Text:** “But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, ‘Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.’” (*Matthew 14:27*).

Jesus selected His disciples so that they could be with Him and could learn from Him. Apparently, they were not as sharp and quick-witted as one would expect. How much different are we? Some of us have been walking with God for several years, and we still do not understand fully what the demands of discipleship are. As in the natural world, so it is in the spiritual. Growth is essential for life. Every day should bring some growth in depth, width, or height. What preparation of soil and nutrients are you making to assure growth and success in discipleship?

This week's lesson will look at more examples from the Word of God that can help us understand what it means to be a disciple of Christ.

**The Week at a Glance:** Why were the disciples of Christ often full of fear? What can we learn from Jesus' warnings about the leaven of the Pharisees? How do we respond to those who purposely close their hearts to our witness?

*\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, March 15.*

## Lessons at Sea

By the time of the events in Mark 4, the disciples had already been with Jesus for a while. How much they must have learned at the foot of the Master.

**Read** Mark 4:36–41. What is so revealing about their words to Him in verse 38? How often do we find ourselves having a similar response in frightful times?

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It is so easy for us to do the same thing, to wonder, when tragedy and problems strike, if God cares at all. The irony, of course, is that Jesus was right there the whole time. He was the One who first told them to take the boat across to begin with. This storm did not take Him by surprise, and neither do our trials.

**What** significance (if any) can be found in the fact that the disciples, not the storm, woke Jesus?

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Notice the element of fear in the disciples all through the account. They feared the storm; and then, after the storm was calmed, they seemed to fear Jesus. The manifestation of such power was impressive, of course, but one would have thought by now that, after their time with Christ, they would have known that they had nothing to fear from Him. On the contrary, this power should have been a source of great hope and comfort to them, because by now they should have known the character of the One who possessed all that power. This account shows that these men still had a lot to learn about what it means to be a disciple of Christ.

**When was the last time you wondered if the Lord cared about you and your situation, whatever it was? What lessons did you learn from that trial that you could use next time you face a trial or tragedy?**

## Lessons at Sea (Continued)

If you think about it, the sea is a good place to learn lessons about discipleship. After all, though as humans we are totally dependent upon God for everything (*see Job 12:10, Dan. 5:23, Acts 17:28*), it is not so easy to forget it when you are out on the water, where what is beneath your feet will not hold you up but will swallow you instead. Perhaps that is why the Lord chose to use the sea to teach His disciples a few more lessons about faith, the key element for any successful discipleship.

Following a successful missionary tour (*Mark 6:6–13*), the feeding of the five thousand, and their first encounter on the lake, the disciples finally should have been catching on. The evening after the feeding of the five thousand, another storm overtook them on the lake, this time without Jesus in the boat with them.

**Read** Matthew 14:22, 33 and Mark 6:45–52. What are the numerous mistakes the disciples made in these two accounts?

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Though one account omits the story of Peter walking on the water, one point both make is that those who witnessed what happened were duly impressed. Some openly called Jesus the Son of God; in Mark's account, they were amazed beyond measure about what they had experienced. It was one thing to be able to get the weather to obey Him, but to have the power to walk on water, especially during a storm? Truly they had been witnesses to the power of God in ways that few people have ever seen.

**Read** Mark 6:51, 52. What point do you think Mark was making about faith and belief? What lessons might there be for us in that point?

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## The Leaven of the Pharisees

**Read** Matthew 16:1–12 and then answer the following questions:

1. What evidence do we have that the leaders who came to Jesus were not sincere in their question? After all, what is wrong with having a sign from heaven? Is the Bible not full of signs from heaven? What point should we as disciples take from what is happening here? *See earlier chapters in Matthew; see also Luke 16:29–31.*

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2. Look carefully at Jesus' words to the Sadducees and the Pharisees. What is the principle behind the specific warning to them (*Matt. 23:23*)?

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3. Read Jesus' words to the disciples in Matthew 16:8–11. What point is Jesus making to them? Why do we find it so easy to do the same thing; that is, to forget the great things God has done before our eyes?

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What a contrast between the Bread of Life and the leaven of the Sadducees and the Pharisees, and yet how easy to get them confused. All disciples of Christ need to be aware that belief or following traditions or *defending* the faith are not always the same as being a disciple of Christ. How easy, once we get established, even comfortable, in what we believe, or in how we worship, or in how we practice our faith, to let these things become ends in and of themselves, instead of a means to an end. That end, of course, is to be a faithful disciple of Christ, doing His will and revealing His love and His character to the world.

## Lessons From Fear

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear”  
(1 John 4:18).

Perhaps you have noticed something through the course of this study, and that is how often the disciples were afraid. All through the Gospels, we find time and again the disciples in various situations, and time and again the Bible records them as being afraid.

**What** was it in these various situations that caused them to fear?  
*Matt. 14:27; 17:6, 7; Mark 10:32; Luke 8:25; 24:37; John 6:19.*  
**What** can we learn from their experiences?

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**Read** Mark 9:30–32. **What** made them fearful here? **What** important point can we take away from this example?

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What is so sad about this case is that they were fearing the one thing that offered them the greatest hope they could possibly have: salvation through the atoning death of Jesus on their behalf. They feared what they did not understand; they feared what they did not want to hear. Had they understood what the Cross was all about, they would not have feared. Hence, it was their ignorance that kept them fearful.

As disciples, as followers of Christ, we should, of all people, have the least to fear. The same Jesus who could walk on water during a storm, who could bring healing to a paralytic, who could feed five thousand with just a few loaves of bread, is the same Jesus who revealed His love to us by dying on the cross as our Substitute. Sure, sin is real, the devil is real, hell will be real, and we need to be aware of the dangers to our souls (*Matt. 10:28*), but in the end, as disciples, as long as we cling to the reality of God’s love as revealed in Christ, we should learn to live within the hope and comfort of God’s amazing love for, and grace toward, us.

## Discipleship and Witness

“I want atheism to be true and am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn’t just that I don’t believe in God and, naturally, hope that I’m right in my belief. It’s that I hope there is no God! I don’t want there to be a God; I don’t want the universe to be like that.”  
—Thomas Nagel, *The Last Word* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 130.

**Look** at the above quote. As disciples, what is to be our attitude toward someone like that? Which Bible texts come to mind as you think about this person? Write out the texts.

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**Now** that you have written down the texts, take the time to go over them. Does a particular theme come through? Are your texts those of compassion, judgment, sorrow, or retribution? Or something else? What does your answer tell you about yourself?

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An inseparable part of what it means to be a disciple is, of course, witnessing. All through the Gospels, we see Jesus preparing His disciples to lead others to salvation. Some folk believed quite readily; others seemed determined to reject Jesus no matter what.

No question, as disciples of Christ, as we witness, we will come across all types, including those who, perhaps not as honestly as the man quoted above, will nevertheless reflect the same kind of attitude.

How do we respond to these people? Anger? Love? A feeling of personal failure? All or none of the above?

What can we learn from the life and teachings of Jesus that will help us, as disciples of Jesus, to deal with those who are determined to close their hearts and minds? At what point, if ever, does our responsibility toward them end?

**Further Study:** Read *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 415–417, 426–441, 746–750; Ellen G. White, “Peace be Still,” pp. 333–341; “A Night on the Lake,” pp. 377–382; “The Foreshadowing of the Cross,” pp. 410–418; “He Was Transfigured,” pp. 419–425; “The Walk to Emmaus,” pp. 795–801, in *The Desire of Ages*; “The Sower Went Forth to Sow,” p. 40, in *Christ’s Object Lessons*; “Light Through Darkness,” pp. 349–350, in *The Great Controversy*.

“Although Peter had been long with the Master, he had a very imperfect conception of the plan of salvation. He did not desire to see the cross in the work of Christ; but it was through the cross that life and hope were to come to dying men.”—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, April 7, 1891.

“God’s children are not to be subject to feelings and emotions. When they fluctuate between hope and fear, the heart of Christ is hurt; for He has given them unmistakable evidence of His love. He wants them to be established, strengthened, and settled in the most holy faith. He wants them to do the work He has given them; then their hearts will become in His hands as sacred harps, every chord of which will send forth praise and thanksgiving to the One sent by God to take away the sins of the world.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 518, 519.

## Discussion Questions:

- 1 What are some of the things that you fear? How can you learn to overcome those fears? On the other hand, are there things that we should rightly fear? Be prepared to discuss your answers in class on Sabbath.
- 2 What are ways we can become modern-day Sadducees and Pharisees? Why is that easier than we think? How are these attitudes manifested in the church today? Also, what are the steps that one takes in going from being a disciple to being a Pharisee? Are they easier than going from being a Pharisee to a disciple? Be prepared to discuss your thoughts in class.
- 3 What would you classify as the leaven of the Sadducees and Pharisees in the church today?
- 4 As a class, talk about the attitude of the man expressed in Thursday’s lesson. In what ways are the principles of the attitude manifested in us, even as Christians? Are there things about our faith or doctrines that we shut our minds to because we simply do not want to believe them? Could it be that we have a hard time learning the lessons the Lord wants to teach us because we do not want to learn them?

## More Than Adventure

by PATRICIA GONZÁLEZ

Ruben González of Argentina loves adventure. He loves sharing his faith even more. On a bus, in the market, wherever he goes he talks to people about Jesus. He led the members of one Protestant church, including their pastor, into the Adventist faith.

Four years ago Ruben heard a mission report in Sabbath School that spoke of the struggles Adventists in Spain face in leading people to Christ. When his nephew in Spain offered him work, Ruben decided to go to Spain. He was 59.

The family borrowed money to buy his airline ticket, and with \$33 in his pocket, he left on his mission adventure to Spain. He spent his last pesos on a visa and a taxi to take him to his nephew's home. But when he arrived, he learned that his nephew's shop had closed down the day before.

Ruben had no money and no place to stay. He found a cheap hostel and left his passport and clothes as guarantee of payment. Then he went looking for work. Praying as he went, he knocked at shops and houses offering to cook, cut grass, paint, build—whatever people needed. But nothing opened up for him. Then Sabbath came.

Ruben worshiped in the hostel on Sabbath. Then in the afternoon he went to visit Don Salvador, a man he had met earlier that week. Not many people liked Don Salvador, but Ruben and Salvador became friends. When Don Salvador realized that Ruben was hungry, he offered him food. The next morning Don Salvador paid Ruben's bill at the hostel and invited him home.

"For lunch?" Ruben asked.

"No, come and live in my house." Ruben gladly accepted.

Don Salvador introduced Ruben to a man who offered Ruben a job. He found an Adventist church and started worshiping with them. The church was large but had only a handful of members. "There are many empty chairs here," Ruben told the members. "We must invite more people to come." He worked with the church members and shared his zeal for evangelism. His enthusiasm sparked the members to invite others to worship, and the church grew to 128 members.

Ruben began preaching and sharing his testimony in churches throughout Spain. His desire to see the church there grow has had an impact on the work. The adventurer found more than adventure in Spain, and the kingdom of God has grown because of his work.

Our mission offerings support many forms of evangelism around the world.

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